

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

**RAND**

## *Turkish Society and Foreign Policy in Troubled Times*

*Shahram Chubin  
Jerrold D. Green*

*Ian O. Lesser (Rapporteur)*

*Center for Middle East Public Policy  
Geneva Center for Security Policy*

**DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A**  
Approved for Public Release  
Distribution Unlimited

20011010 097

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

**RAND**

## *Turkish Society and Foreign Policy in Troubled Times*

*Shahram Chubin  
Jerrold D. Green*

*Ian O. Lesser (Rapporteur)*

*Geneva, Switzerland*

*April 25–27, 2001*

*Center for Middle East Public Policy  
Geneva Center for Security Policy*

**NUMBER 2 IN A SERIES**

The conference papers described in this report were supported by RAND's Center for Middle East Public Policy and the Geneva Center for Security Policy.

ISBN: 0-8330-3059-0

The RAND conference proceedings series makes it possible to publish conference papers and discussions quickly by forgoing formal review, editing, and reformatting. Proceedings may include materials as diverse as reproductions of briefing charts, talking points, or carefully written scientific papers. Citation and quotation is permitted, but it is advisable to check with authors before citing or quoting because of the informal nature of the material.

RAND is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND® is a registered trademark. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of its research sponsors.

© Copyright 2001 RAND

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from RAND.

Published 2001 by RAND

1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050

201 North Craig Street, Suite 102, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

RAND URL: <http://www.rand.org/>

To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002; Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: [order@rand.org](mailto:order@rand.org)

On April 25-27, 2001, RAND's Center for Middle East Public Policy (CMEPP) and the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP) held a workshop focusing on the evolving strategic role of Turkey. This conference was the second in a series of collaborative efforts by GCSP and RAND in the area of security policy. We would like to thank Ian Lesser for acting as the rapporteur for the conference, and all of the conference participants who are enumerated in Appendix 2.

Shahram Chubin, Jerrold Green

# **TURKISH SOCIETY AND FOREIGN POLICY IN TROUBLED TIMES**

## **Report of a Geneva Center for Security Policy/RAND Workshop**

**Ian O. Lesser**

*Rapporteur*

### **Introduction**

In 1999, at the previous RAND-GCSP workshop in Geneva, participants took up the topic of NATO and Middle Eastern security. With changes in Europe, the Gulf and the Middle East peace process, Turkey's pivotal role in relation to both European and Middle Eastern security emerged as a consistent theme. The workshop organizers came away from that meeting convinced of the need to consider Turkey's regional role in more detail. The April 2001 workshop on Turkey was the result. In the months before the meeting, the importance of Turkey's future was underscored by a series of financial crises, posing formidable economic and political challenges for Turks, and for Turkey's partners in the West. There is a strong sense among observers in Turkey, in Europe and in the United States, that Turkey has reached a critical crossroads, and that decisions taken in the next months will shape the country's future for decades to come.

Against this background a group of some twenty experts from Turkey, Europe and the U.S. came together for an informal discussion organized around four broad themes: 1) Turkish society and politics; 2) Turkey in the international context; 3) Turkey's regional relations; and 4) Turkey, the EU and NATO. Not surprisingly, Turkey's economic and political travails and the implications of the current financial crisis were important themes in our debate. The following summary reflects the rapporteur's sense of the discussion, which was conducted entirely on a not-for-attribution basis.

### **Turkey – Politics and Society Under Strain**

Debate over the current crisis and possible solutions is in no sense a conceptual exercise for Turks, including participants in our workshop. Everyday lives have been disrupted at all levels of society. Analysts, too, find it difficult to think in strategic terms, and the focus is very much on short-term questions. Thinking is measured in days, rather than weeks. In this sense the crisis has been dramatic and unifying. But it has also pushed issues that have been central to Turkey's recent political discourse into the background. The Kurdish question, Islam and secularism, and civil-military relations – all central questions for the future – have been relegated to secondary status. That said, failure to overcome the country's immediate economic and political challenges could deepen and exacerbate cleavages within Turkish society in the years ahead.

Although many were aware of troubles in the banking sector, where the crisis began, the extent of the financial turmoil and, above all, the links to the international financial system, have taken many Turks by surprise. This, in turn, has stimulated an active, and sometimes very critical debate over "globalization". It is a debate that touches on long-cherished notions of the role of the state and national sovereignty in Turkey.

The dynamics of change are no longer limited to those that have been present in the traditional debate. The EU's offer of candidacy status to Turkey at its December 1999 summit in Helsinki occupies a central place here. Helsinki gave Turkey a strategic objective, and introduced a new set of terminology into the Turkish discourse. The EU's "Copenhagen criteria", setting standards for democracy, the rule of law, human rights, the market economy, and the "protection of minorities", have become a focal point for Kurds, liberals, Islamists and others seeking reform in Turkey. The participants in Turkish politics now position themselves according to where they stand on these criteria. Many are aware that Turkey's recently announced "national program", the formal response to the EU's accession partnership document, is a less than ambitious effort. The forces of the status quo are powerful, entrenched and loathe to relinquish traditional approaches based on Kemalist ideology, and which also constitute sources of political patronage.

The early post-Helsinki optimism about Europe has waned. The financial crisis emerged just before the announcement of the national program, and has changed perceptions on all sides.

Turkey is now mired in a seemingly incurable debt trap – some \$160 billion in total debt, over sixty percent of which is in the public sector. It suggests the need for a total overhaul, not only of the Turkish economy, but also Turkish politics and society. Reducing the role of the state means eliminating the power base of the existing political class, and there are few credible successors waiting in the wings with a different approach. At base, the economic crisis is really a political crisis. Turkish reformers, the EU, and Washington all seem agreed on the need for Turkey's "obsolete, inept and corrupt" political class to go. In this environment, two figures have acquired enormous popularity in Turkey. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer appears to embody a respect for the rule of law, decency and the struggle against corruption. He is in many ways the antithesis of his predecessor, Suleiman Demirel, who embodied the traditional order. Sezer is reported to enjoy the support of 70-75 percent of the Turkish public, despite the fact that he probably bears some responsibility for the current crisis. The other very popular figure is Kemal Dervish, a technocratic outsider, brought in as an "economic czar" and the focal point of popular Turkish hopes for an end to the financial troubles. If he succeeds, he could well end up as Prime Minister.

The economic crisis has brought Turkey to a cross roads: collapse or renewal? The paths are stark. Turkey could embark on reforms necessary to recover from the economic crisis, which would facilitate movement on further economic and political reform that would modernize Turkish society and move it closer to Europe. This is the most optimistic scenario. Alternatively, Turkey may fail to reform, fail to adjust, and descend into chaos. In this second scenario, the existing cleavages in Turkish society, between Kurds and Turks, Islamists and secularists, Sunnis and Alevis, and between haves and have-nots, will become sharper. The result could be turmoil and, possibly, military intervention, with obvious implications for Turkey's European aspirations. In fact, the most likely path is reformist, at least to some degree. Notably, Turkey's Islamists are not well positioned today. They have been in retreat since 1997 and are hobbled by legal scrutiny and internal divisions. Their disarray, together with the clear prospect of international opposition, make military intervention unlikely barring serious social unrest.

Several participants noted the importance of Turkey's political culture in understanding the current crisis and reactions to it. A key element here is the traditional respect for hierarchy, within institutions such as the military and political parties, and in society as a whole. One consequence of this is an apparent passivity on the part of the Turkish public, even under

conditions of strain – or at least, a high threshold for protest. Defensiveness regarding external criticism and a pervasive fear of national dismemberment are also legacies of Turkey's historical experience, and these elements continue to affect Turkish perceptions of international relations (and the role of international institutions in the country's financial crisis).

The image of Turkey "at a cross roads" is appealing and has much validity, but Turkey might still "muddle through" without fundamental change. Experience of economic crises elsewhere, in Latin America or even Europe and North America in the inter-war years, points to a wide range of possible outcomes. The link between economic crisis and political change is not so clear or predictable. For Turks today, the key complaints involve economic mismanagement, corruption, and above all, the lack of leadership at the national level. The ossified nature of Turkish politics, with its powerful system of patronage and an antiquated party system, strongly inhibits the emergence of a modern political elite.

Is the Turkish glass half full, or half empty? At least one participant expressed the idea that the glass was actually half empty, with the role of the Turkish state at the core of the problem. EU candidacy (which, it was stated, would not have been achieved without German support at Helsinki) can push Turkey in the right direction, but the conditions inside Turkey do not encourage this. The defenders of the strong state, especially the military, show little sign of pulling back from their traditional role – and the question of religion in Turkey remains unresolved.<sup>1</sup> In Europe, it was suggested, even social democrats like Helmut Schmidt are skeptical. With ambivalence on all sides, Turkey's EU candidacy may well prove hollow. In any case, the preoccupation with economic recovery could leave little energy for EU-related political reforms or efforts to resolve the problems of Cyprus and the Aegean.

Turkey's search for a new political class is, of course, not unique. It has been a refrain in recent years across the developed and the developing world, and has been particularly evident elsewhere in southern Europe, including Italy. Turkey's debate about transparency and the problem of the "deep state" also has parallels elsewhere. The economic crisis has spurred this debate in Turkey, but it probably started in earnest with the 1998 earthquake and anger at state institutions that appeared to be ineffective and self-serving. Successive crises have emphasized

---

<sup>1</sup> There was a sharp side debate on the question of religion. One participant suggested the need to encourage democratic Islam in Turkey as a means of providing the country with effective leadership. This view was strongly opposed by others who expressed deep skepticism about the democratic inclinations of Turkey's Islamist politicians, including those of the "modern" school.



the lack of transparency in how Turkey actually works. Western observers are often at a loss to understand the social, political and economic dynamics inside Turkey – a longstanding ally. In many respects, the attempt to understand contemporary Turkey is akin to the “Kremlinology” of the Cold War years. It is an equally confusing exercise for the Turks themselves. Paradoxes abound, and many (e.g., tradition alongside reform) date to Ottoman times. It is even unclear to what extent it still makes sense to speak of a “Turkish” view of domestic or regional issues. Social cleavages and regionalization have encouraged different economic and political cultures in Istanbul, Ankara, and Anatolia. Turkey faces the task of making itself more “recognizable” and less mystifying to the outside world – and to its own citizens.

### **Turkey in the International Context**

It has become commonplace to note Turkey’s geographic position astride Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East, and the country’s growing regional role. Looking ahead, this role will be shaped as much by the nature of the Turkish “project” – developments inside the country -- and evolving attitudes toward globalization, national sovereignty, and the emergence of an international civil society. Turkey is not alone in facing these dilemmas.

Turkey possesses important assets, including its geography, natural resources, a large population, and skilled elites. The country’s imperial past encourages Turks to think in expansive terms. In some respects, Turkey is already regionally dominant, although its policies have not been oriented toward power projection -- with some notable exceptions such as Cyprus in 1974 and more recent policy toward Syria and northern Iraq. Kemalism has given the country a useful political profile, allowing it to straddle differing ideological tendencies in Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East (in general, Ankara is “not unacceptable” to others). But Turkey also suffers from some limitations. At around \$200 billion per year (prior to the financial crises of 2000/2001) its economy is not that large; lying somewhere between Denmark and Switzerland. Kemalism and the character of the Turkish state have also had an isolating effect on relations with the Arab world, and arguably with Europe.

Turkey has had an embarrassment of strategic choices. On the whole, the country has opted for prudence and restraint, from Ankara’s careful neutrality in World War II, to its Western orientation during the Cold War. With the exception of Cyprus in 1974 (and perhaps the cross-border interventions in northern Iraq), Turkey has not been involved in armed conflict,

apart from peacekeeping operations, since the 1920s. The country has maintained a balanced approach to the Middle East, notwithstanding a close relationship with Israel. In the Balkans, Turkey has been a model of moderation and multilateralism, and relations with Russia and the Caucasus have been relatively low-profile given the interests at stake. But prudence does not necessarily imply political acumen, and difficult relationships abound on Turkey's borders.

What is the organizing principle for Turkish strategy? Ataturk's famous formulation "peace at home, peace abroad" is fine, but limited. Maintaining order at home may well conflict with international objectives, as evident in Ankara's stance on the Kurdish issue and religious politics. In these cases, considerations of domestic order will be difficult to reconcile with, for example, the EU's Copenhagen Criteria. In regional terms, as well, Turkey is at peace, but it is a rather cool peace with Greece, Armenia, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

The key dimensions of Turkish policy are a mixture of longstanding interests and more recent objectives: Links to NATO and the U.S.; closer integration with the EU; support for the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus"; engagement in the Caucasus and Central Asia; coexistence with Russia; and closer relations with Israel. Clearly, not all of these policies are naturally compatible, and pose challenges of reconciliation. Ankara's Cyprus policy complicates relations with both Washington and Brussels. And Turkey's stakes in NATO and EU approaches to European security have proven difficult to reconcile in practice, as the on-going dispute over Turkey's role in new European defense initiatives makes clear.

More fundamentally, these diverse foreign policy interests impose quite different requirements for adaptation and reform within Turkish society. The post-Helsinki environment and Turkey's EU candidacy imply the clearest need for change. But more generally, Turkey faces challenges of integration and globalization that threaten state sovereignty, and conflict in important ways with the Ottoman and Kemalist legacies. The leading role of the Turkish military is the product of historical experience and the reality of an insecure environment. Yet, this role is clearly incompatible with the EU's Copenhagen criteria. Similarly, the traditional approach to the question of national identity and the position of ethnic minorities is coming under growing pressure, internally and in a European context. Multiple identities have become the norm elsewhere, including in Britain, France and Spain. Pressures for change in Turkey are almost certain to grow, and will be reinforced to the extent that the European vocation persists.

For Turkey's Western partners, these wrenching processes of change will require considerable patience. Ultimately, decisions regarding the future of Turkish society can only be made by Turks, although international partners may still exert some influence. In this context, non-governmental organizations with links to various sectors inside Turkey – and the non-state sector within Turkey itself – are likely to play increasingly important roles.

The prospect of closer integration with Europe, and ultimately, EU membership provide key incentives for change. But is Europe serious about the notion of Turkish membership? For Turkish and Western observers alike, this remains an open question. In the words of one participant, it is "unclear whether the EU Council decision [regarding Turkish candidacy] in Helsinki was European decision-making at its best, or at its worst." The decision cannot be reversed, but Turkey's candidacy could languish and lose momentum, perhaps permanently. Many European leaderships are clearly uncomfortable with the idea of Turkey in Europe, and this could produce a "hollow" candidacy and disillusionment on all sides. At the end of the day, the EU is not going to join Turkey, but Turkey has the option of moving toward Europe. Given the uncertainties regarding Turkey's EU prospects, convergence and integration may prove more useful and realistic objectives than membership per se.

### **Turkey and Regional Relations**

As Turkish foreign policy has become more complex and active, the task of understanding the dynamics of Turkish policymaking has also become more difficult. The current scene is a blend of traditional and relatively recent factors. Some key drivers of Turkish policy can be identified, including the Kemalist emphasis on a Western orientation, and the tendency to hold the non-secular Arab and Muslim worlds at arms length (Turkey's Islamist and pan-Turkist counter-elites have, of course, taken a different approach, but their influence has been limited). Turkey's security consciousness, both internal and external, also exerts a strong influence on regional policy, especially with regard to the Middle East. The tendency to view regional relations through a security lens has historically been coupled with a degree of sensitivity and suspicion, even in relations with Western allies. This can be seen in the persistence of the "Sevres syndrome" frequently cited by Turkish analysts, attitudes toward Armenian and Kurdish irridentism, and perceptions of the EU. "Behind Helsinki lies Luxembourg".

Institutional and personal factors have also left a mark in recent years. Political weakness, and the departure of President Demirel have weakened Cabinet involvement in foreign policy and reinforced the already powerful role of the military and the National Security Council. Bulent Ecevit's interest in Third World causes and his fixation on the Cyprus issue (where the military's prestige is also heavily invested) has influenced policy in important ways. By contrast, figures such as Kemal Dervis – a rising political star in the context of Turkey's financial crisis – embody a more cosmopolitan and multilateral outlook. This outlook is generally shared by Turkey's private sector elites, who have played an increasingly important part in Turkey's international engagement. Their future role, however, is likely to turn substantially on the prospects for Turkey's economic recovery. Indeed, Turkey's more ambitious regional schemes, including Black Sea cooperation and efforts in Central Asia and the Caucasus, have been hindered by Ankara's limited ability to fund sweeping geopolitical projects. Even in the defense realm, Turkey's traditionally high level of military spending, including large-scale modernization plans, face an uncertain future, with implications for regional balances.

Turkish policy has been affected to some extent by the emergence of ethnic lobbies inside the country in recent years. These have been quite active in relation to Balkan crises, especially Bosnia, on Azerbaijan and Chechnya, and of course, on Cyprus. But the effectiveness of these lobbies is variable and often limited. As an example, it was suggested that if the Chechen lobby was so significant, actions like hostage takings on ferries and in hotels would be unnecessary. Bosnia, however, offered a quite different example, with a well-placed Bosnian "lobby" augmented by the strong support of Turkish public opinion.

An additional and important theme concerns Turkey's historical role on the periphery of several regional systems – European, Eurasian and Middle Eastern. The problem of being on the periphery, aspiring to full participation, especially in Europe, continues to exert a powerful influence on Turkish thinking. The fear of marginalization is evident in the Turkish foreign and security policy establishment's approach to relations with the European Union, including the current dispute over Turkey's place in emerging European security and defense arrangements.

Many observers have noted the growing activism of Turkish foreign policy in recent years -- an activism that has taken quite different forms in different areas. In the Middle East, Turkey has shown itself willing to use or threaten the use of force in addressing problems in Northern Iraq, as well as with Syria and Iran. The close connection to Kurdish separatism and the

PKK insurgency has given these policies a particularly hard edge. The emergence of a close, strategic relationship with Israel represents another kind of activism, one in which defense and defense industrial collaboration has formed the core. On the whole, and with the exception of the Israeli link, Turks have tended to see the Middle East as a region of security challenges rather than opportunities. In the Balkans, by contrast, Ankara has pursued a consciously cautious and multilateral set of policies. In the Aegean, and in the overall relationship with Greece, there has been a notable improvement, driven by the political interests of both sides – an equation in which the EU looms large. But Cyprus remains a difficult issue for Turkish nationalists, and looming EU decisions on Cypriot membership could lead to renewed friction in Ankara's relations with Greece, and with the EU as a whole.

Finally, relations with Russia exhibit a marked "dualism". Historically, and perhaps in the longer-term, the management of relations with Russia is the leading security issue for Turkey. But the magnitude of Turkish-Russian trade (including large-scale energy imports) and the need for coexistence at the political level work against more competitive policies. Nonetheless, the Turkish and Russian "near abroads" overlap in areas such as the Caucasus and Central Asia, and some degree of geopolitical competition may be inevitable. Turkey's recent activism in Eurasia is real, but fragile. Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Caucasus Stability Pact are centerpieces of Turkish policy, but they suffer from political limitations (e.g., the lack of relations between Turkey and Armenia) and a general shortage of resources. There has even been talk of a forward Turkish military presence in Georgia – a move that would raise alarm in Moscow. The prospects for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline are evolving on a daily basis, but the overall outlook remains highly uncertain. Notwithstanding the prominence of new energy-related projects in the Turkish debate, it is arguable that Turkey's primary objectives in Eurasia are political rather than economic – consolidating the independence of former-Soviet states and promoting "strategic pluralism" across the region.

Beyond regional challenges, Ankara faces a number of functional issues of increasing importance for Turkey's foreign relations. Key issues in this regard include access to adequate and secure energy supplies to fuel the country's economy, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles of increasing range on Turkey's Middle Eastern borders and the related matter of missile defense (what would be the implications of a nuclear Iran, Iraq or Syria for Turkey's regional position and the salience of NATO security guarantees?). To these can be

added a long list of trans-national issues, from money laundering and drug trafficking to human smuggling and refugee movements, that have acquired a more prominent place in Turkey's relations with neighbors and the West. Participants judged that Turkey's economic crisis and political uncertainties leave the country with less energy to devote to the management of all of these questions, and leave Ankara with less room for maneuver in relations with the West. To the extent that Turkey is reliant on U.S. and European influence in the IMF and elsewhere, there may be growing pressure for Turkey to conform to Western (especially U.S. ) policy preferences vis-à-vis Iraq, or Russia. Should Turks perceive that the West has not been supportive, there is also a risk of a nationalist reaction on Cyprus or other issues.

Looking ahead to the next five years, there are many areas of potential problems and opportunities for Turkey. The future of Iraq will be critical in determining the demands on Turkish foreign and security policy. Ankara clearly prefers a stable, unitary Iraq with Kurdish separatism contained and refugee flows minimized. But other futures are possible and Ankara will need to react. The stability and evolution of Iran poses another variable. Positive developments here, as in Iraq, could offer important economic as well as political opportunities. "Smart sanctions" are very much in Turkey's interest, allowing a revival of trade with isolated regimes while maintaining a useful posture of military containment.

Renewed turmoil in Lebanon or unrest in Syria, perhaps connected to developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict, could complicate Turkey's regional relationships and might encourage new insurgencies threatening Turkish security. Whither Russia? Reform and a cooperative relationship with the West would produce a more benign security environment, but might also increase the attractiveness of Russian energy routes and reduce Western interest in Turkey. More competitive scenarios here would focus additional attention on Turkey, but at considerable risk. Turkey's relationship with the West is also in flux, with the uncertain outlook for Turkish-EU relations as a critical variable. At least one participant was skeptical of the consensus on Turkey as a pivotal, positive regional actor, asserting that Turkey might actually be "part of the problem" in regional security terms.

Growing activism in Turkey's external policy should not obscure the impressive degree of continuity in Turkey's post-Cold War objectives – the management of regional disputes, the maintenance of national unity in the face of "terrorism and secessionism", a normative

attachment to the West, and the promotion of economic interests in the Middle East, Eurasia, and not least, in Europe.

### **Turkey, the EU and NATO**

Turkey has long been part of the European “system” even if underlying issues of identity remain unresolved. In a narrower sense, Turkey has also had a history of agreements with the EC/EU, beginning with the association agreement of 1963, anticipating closer Turkish integration. That said, there has been a growing gap between Turkey and the rest of Southern Europe in terms of European integration and the “Europeanization” of internal and external policy. The Copenhagen criteria established in 1993, and setting the conditions for EU membership, changed the rules of the game for Turkey among others. The offer of candidacy status at the Helsinki summit reversed a period of Turkish disillusionment about Europe stemming from the 1997 Luxembourg summit, which even the most pro-European Turks interpreted as a snub. The Helsinki outcome can be explained in terms of several factors, including a change in the German position on Turkish candidacy, a change in the Greek position, pressure from Washington, and a recognition that the EU had badly mishandled the Turkish case in Luxembourg. Broadly, the growing European interest in developing a common foreign and security policy may also have played a role by encouraging European policymakers to take a more strategic view of relations with Ankara.

Post-Helsinki, “the ball is now in Turkey’s court.” Meeting the Copenhagen criteria will require dismantling key elements of the Kemalist system, and implies sovereignty compromises that many Turks – even the reform minded – may find uncomfortable. Paradoxically, Turkish success in meeting the criteria and joining Europe in a full, institutional sense would actually legitimize and validate Atatürk’s revolution. Turkey’s objective of joining Europe, was however strongly questioned by one participant who asked “why Turkey bothered” given Europe’s obvious reservations and, perhaps, the existence of better opportunities elsewhere. The responses emphasized history and practicality: the vocation is old — Southeastern Europe was the “heartland” of the Ottoman Empire – and Turkey’s key markets are in Europe, not the Middle East. But the discussion left a clear impression that Turkey’s European aspirations continue to be marked by ambivalence on all sides. For the more skeptical, the discussion of Turkey’s EU prospects requires a “suspension of disbelief.”

Ankara's plan in response to the EU's Accession Partnership Document – a key milestone in the candidacy process – is widely regarded as too vague and too weak, especially on issues relating to the Copenhagen criteria. Almost all Turks broadly accept the need to improve the country's human rights situation, but old habits are difficult to eradicate and conservatives remain wary of the effect on Islamism and Kurdish nationalism, the perennial internal security concerns.<sup>2</sup> Progress is certainly possible, but will be extremely difficult in the absence of a significant change in political leadership.

As noted earlier, the economic crisis could hasten positive political changes and ultimately improve the prospects for European oriented reforms. The EU Commissioner for Enlargement has said that the crisis will not affect Turkey's membership prospects, but there are risks. High inflation and public sector deficits, while nothing new for Turkey, are clearly incompatible with EU membership. A protracted economic crisis is likely to fuel existing European concerns about the magnitude of the challenges associated with Turkish integration. In this context, scale matters. In ten years time, Turkey's population may rival that of Germany, with all the problems of adjustment that this would imply. Even cultural questions are magnified by the issue of scale.

Whereas many Europeans see the European project as, above all, the construction of a liberal order, many Turks are focused on the geopolitical and security aspects. In this context, Turkey's prospective role in ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy) is at the center of the Turkish debate over Europe. Turkey's foreign and security policy elites tend to see EU decisions in this area as a test case regarding Europe's longer-term interest in Turkish membership. Ankara argues that European security is indivisible, and that the bulk of future EU defense contingencies are likely to arise on or near Turkey's borders. This is equally true for NATO, where the majority of the canonical contingencies touch directly on Turkish security. Europe, for its part, is more inclined to see defense missions as linked to questions of membership and even identity ("who and what are we defending?"), with Turkey held at arms length in terms of commitments and decision-making. At some point, however, Turkey's willingness to block transatlantic consensus on European defense arrangements will begin to impose higher political costs. It will

---

<sup>2</sup> One participant offered the following typology of Turkish views on human rights: First, "enthusiastic liberalizers" who seek reform regardless of their views on Europe (including some on the left who dislike the EU); second, "reluctant liberalizers" who see the practical benefits of change, especially in relations with the West; and third, outright "conservatives" who reject any change on principle.



also conflict with Turkey's overarching stake (with the U.S.) in seeing new EU defense initiatives develop to the greatest extent possible in a NATO framework. Ankara would like to see the sort of early participation in EU defense decision-making that Turkey was accorded as an associate member of the Western European Union. It is a difficult problem, apparently technical, but ultimately highly political in the sense that it is seen as a measure of European "seriousness" with regard to Turkey.

But what kind of Europe and what kind of West will Turkey face? It was suggested that however substantial the variables on the Turkish side, much could change in Europe and in transatlantic relations in the coming years, with great meaning for Turkey's role. The economic crisis and the international response has, for example, stimulated an active debate in Turkey on the question of globalization and where Turkey "fits" in an evolving international system. The EU, for its part, may look quite different in ten or fifteen years time, and could develop new patterns of membership and association with meaning for the Turkish position. As the European foreign and security policy evolves, will Europe want to have borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria?

In a transatlantic setting, it is similarly uncertain that the U.S. will retain its traditional degree of involvement in regions of keen interest to Turkey. A reduction in American engagement would call into question basic elements of the Turkish security calculus, without any guarantee of an acceptable Turkish position in European institutions. Even if the U.S. remains fully engaged in European and Middle Eastern affairs, Turkish-U.S. relations may not evolve smoothly. Here, the elements of potential friction include nationalism and sovereignty concerns on the Turkish side, together with Washington's tendency to take for granted Turkey's willingness to act as a regional security partner (e.g., in the containment of Iraq and Iran). In this regard, it was suggested that much of the problem stems from a perceived lack of consultation. Turks will seek a *sense of responsiveness* to Turkey's own regional interests and security concerns ("U.S.-Turkish relations are 80% presentational"). A decline in American attention to European security could also cause Washington to value Turkey more for its Middle Eastern connections, however complicated these may be.

### **Concluding Observations**

The workshop did not attempt to offer firm conclusions about the future of Turkey as a society and its international role. The diversity of views among the participants would certainly have made this a difficult task. Nonetheless, a number of broad themes did emerge from the discussion. The following observations give a sense of the issues central to the current debate about Turkey, and likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

First, the question of identity remains critical for Turkey and in Turkey's relations with Europe and the West. It is far from a settled question and, to an important extent, remains open within Turkish society and elsewhere. The debate about Turkey in Europe, in particular, has placed the issue of "values" at center stage, and values now play a key role in shaping the perception of Turkish interests. The turmoil in Turkey's economy and politics has had the effect of sharpening the debate about values and identity, as Turkish society confronts stark choices about liberalization, security and reform.

Second, the evolution of Turkish society and politics in the coming years will be the leading variable in determining where Turkey fits in the international system. Europe may be highly ambivalent about Turkish membership in the EU, but the Helsinki summit has opened a path that Turkey can pursue with greater or lesser vigor. Turkey's own ambivalence need not prevent closer convergence with European norms and policies, with or without the prospect of membership. Internal change will also be a key enabling element in closer relations between Turkey and the U.S., and will influence the character of Turkey's regional engagement.

Third, Turkey's foreign and security policies have become more active and complex in recent years. The country's policy horizons have expanded, with a recognition of new risks and new opportunities. Overall, Ankara remains a conservative actor on the international scene, but the persistence of regional flashpoints such as Cyprus, and longer-term geopolitical frictions in Eurasia and the Middle East give Turkey's policies a security-conscious flavor. Key external issues such as policy toward Iraq and the EU are viewed, above all, in light of their implications for the internal stability and direction of the country. The internal scene, in turn, influences the strength of Turkish nationalism, a leading force in contemporary Turkey. Observers may differ on whether Turkey is "part of the problem", or "part of the solution" in regional security terms. But by any definition, Turkey is a pivotal actor across multiple regions and in relation to many prominent policy challenges, from proliferation to migration.

Finally, the current crisis is as much political as economic, and its significance cannot be overestimated. Turkey is truly at a cross roads. There is the potential for fundamental reform and the emergence of new political leadership that will facilitate Turkey's modernization and Europeanization. There is also the potential for stagnation, turmoil, a nationalist reaction, and the emergence of a more inward-looking policy. Turkey's partners in the West have a keen stake in fostering movement along the first path, but ultimately the critical choices will be made in Turkey, by Turks.

# **WORKSHOP ON TURKEY** **GCSP, 25-27 APRIL 2001**

## *Programme*

### **Wednesday, 25 April 2001**

19h30                    **Dinner at the Hôtel d'Angleterre**  
**Welcome**  
 Ambassador Ulrich LEHNER, Director, GCSP

### **Thursday, 26 April 2001**

09h00-09h15           **Welcome and Introduction**  
 Dr. Shahram CHUBIN, Director of Research, GCSP

09h15-11h15           **Turkey: Politics and Society**  
 Chair: Dr. Jerrold GREEN, Director of International Programs and Development; Director,  
 Center for Middle East Public Policy, RAND

*Turkey's domestic evolution: Pressures and Constraints*  
 Dr. Cengiz ÇANDAR, Senior Political Columnist, Yeni Safak Newspaper of Istanbul

Discussants:    Prof. Ahmet EVIN, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabanci  
 University, Istanbul  
 Prof. Sabri SAYARI, Executive Director, Institute of Turkish Studies,  
 Georgetown University, Washington D.C.  
 Prof. Udo STEINBACH, Deutsches Orient Institut, Hamburg

11h15-11h45           **Coffee Break**

11h45-12h30           **General Discussion**  
 Chair: Dr. Jerrold D. GREEN, Director of International Programs and Development;  
 Director, Center for Middle East Public Policy, RAND

12h30-13h30           **Lunch**

13h30-14h15           **Turkey in the International Context**  
 Chair: Dr. Shahram CHUBIN, Director of Research, GCSP

*Turkey's International Role*  
 Prof. François HEISBOURG, Chairman, GCSP Foundation Council

14h15-16h00           **Turkey and Regional Relations**  
 Chair: Dr. Shahram CHUBIN, Director of Research, GCSP

*Turkey in its regional contexts*  
 Dr. Philip J. ROBINS, Lecturer in the Politics of the Middle East, St. Antony's College,  
 University of Oxford

Discussants:    Dr. Bülent ARAS, Vice Director, Institute of Social Sciences, Fatih  
 University, Istanbul  
 Dr. Ian O. LESSER, Senior Analyst, RAND  
 Prof. Dr. Gareth WINROW, Bilgi University, Istanbul

16h00-16h30      *Coffee Break*

16h30-17h30      **General Discussion**  
Chair: Dr. Shahram CHUBIN, Director of Research, GCSP

20h00              *Dinner at the Brasserie Lipp*

*Friday, 27 April 2001*

09h00-11h00      **Turkey, the EU and NATO**  
Chair: Prof. Sabri SAYARI, Executive Director, Institute of Turkish Studies, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.

*Turkey and the West*  
Dr. F. Stephen LARRABEE, RAND Corporate Chair in European Security and Senior Staff Member, RAND

Discussants:      Dr. Ali Lüfti KARAOSMANOGLU, Chairman, Department of International Relations, Bilkent University, Ankara  
                         Dr. William HALE, Department of Political Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London

11h00-11h30      *Coffee Break*

11h30-13h00      **General Discussion and Concluding Remarks**  
Dr. Shahram CHUBIN, Director of Research, GCSP  
Dr. Jerrold D. GREEN, Director of International Programs and Development; Director, Center for Middle East Public Policy, RAND

13h00              *Lunch, Attique WMO Building*

**WORKSHOP ON TURKEY, GCSP, 25-27 APRIL 2001**

*List of Participants*

Dr. Shahram CHUBIN, Director of Research, GCSP

Ambassador Ulrich LEHNER, Director, GCSP

Col. Michael HÜBNER, Director, European Security Policy Training Course (ETC), GCSP

Ambassador Richard NARICH, Faculty Member, GCSP

Dr. Fred TANNER, Deputy Director, GCSP

Dr. Tapani VAAHTORANTA, Faculty Member, GCSP

Dr. Bülent ARAS, Assistant Professor, Vice-Director, Institute of Social Sciences, Fatih University, Istanbul

Dr. Cengiz ÇANDAR, Senior Political Columnist, Yeni Safak Newspaper of Istanbul

Prof. Ahmet EVIN, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabanci University, Istanbul

Dr. Jerrold D. GREEN, Director of International Programs and Development; Director, Center for Middle East Public Policy, RAND

Dr. William HALE, Department of Political Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London

Prof. François HEISBOURG, Chairman, GCSP Foundation Council

Dr. Ali Lüfti KARAOSMANOGLU, Chairman, Department of International Relations, Bilkent University, Ankara

Dr. F. Stephen LARRABEE, RAND Corporate Chair in European Security and Senior Staff Member, RAND

Dr. Ian O. LESSER, Senior Analyst, RAND

Dr. Philip J. ROBINS, Lecturer in the Politics of the Middle East, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford

Dr. Sabri SAYARI, Executive Director, Institute of Turkish Studies, Georgetown University

Prof. Dr. Udo STEINBACH, Deutsches Orient Institut, University of Hamburg

Prof. Gareth M. WINROW, Department of International Relations, Bilgi University, Istanbul